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Mrs L Bills
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bills

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 June to look at the way that learning outside the classroom contributes to your school's curriculum and to pupils' achievement and personal development.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with the senior team, interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and brief visits to classes and some activities.

The overall effectiveness of the contribution made by learning outside the classroom to the curriculum was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards, including personal development

- Pupils' attainment on entry is broadly average. That said, a significant minority start school with some catching up to do particularly in communication, language and literacy. All pupils achieve well and make good progress due to the high quality care and the consistently good teaching they receive.
- You monitor the pupils' progress very well indeed through careful assessment which informs the teachers' planning.

- The use of information communication technology (ICT) is a real strength throughout the school; this is helping the pupils to learn at a good pace. LOTC activities are captured assiduously through use of video and digital cameras and recordings are integrated appropriately into lessons to consolidate the pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the school are exemplary. Most are articulate and confident to talk to visitors and they do so in a mature and courteous manner. They are enthusiastic and motivated in lessons and collaborate sensibly in play activities. The work ethic and concentration exhibited by the older pupils were impressive.

Quality of teaching and learning within LOTC

- In the brief snapshots of lessons and activities observed, relationships were excellent. Teaching was lively and purposeful and led to commendable levels of concentration. You and the adults set high expectations and question pupils in a sensitive and skilful manner. In turn they respond enthusiastically and are motivated to learn.
- The half-termly additional homework linked to topic themes is both an innovative and imaginative initiative which the pupils appreciate. The range of open-ended tasks is excellent and allows the pupils to have greater ownership of their learning. Some of the homework on display was of a high quality and, as one pupil enthusiastically remarked, 'this extra learning is relating to what I am learning in class and helping me to make good progress'!
- It was clear from the discussions with the pupils that they enjoy the opportunities to make choices and work creatively on practical tasks at home. The 'hats' the pupils designed, inspired by a visit to the Costume Exhibition in Bath as part of a history and design technology project, were delightful. Encouraging the pupils to email written homework back to school is indeed a refreshing approach. This is contributing strongly to the very good standards and progress in ICT.
- LOTC is stimulating the pupils' thirst for learning and all spoke poignantly about how such experiences bring learning alive. 'It helps my writing to be more imaginative' remarked one pupil, 'it creates pictures in my mind which help me understand better' said another, and a third commented, in relation to a drama workshop, 'role play helps me to understand the feelings of others'.

Quality of the contribution made by LOTC to the curriculum

- LOTC is central to the school's philosophy for learning and has been for some time. You and the staff make every effort to ensure that it is at the heart of the curriculum and planning and assessment are detailed. LOTC is integrated successfully into all subjects and features strongly, where relevant, in every theme.

- You make excellent use of the school's rural situation and the close proximity to local cities, which are rich in culture and steeped in history, to provide an extensive range of activities for LOTC. Visits and residential experiences are chosen thoughtfully to whet the pupils' appetite for learning, and they do! It was delightful to witness the joy that the reception pupils showed as they explored the school grounds energetically to discover mathematical shapes.
- There is a high level of practical work and opportunities for pupils to interact with their peers and skilled specialists. As a result, work produced by the pupils following a LOTC experience is of a consistently good standard. Visits to the Mosque, Blagdon Water Station, @ Bristol, Wookey Hole, Weston-Super-Mare, the Holbourne Museum, Barton Hall and Mill on the Brue are fitting examples.
- The range of clubs and other enrichment activities on offer are impressive. The regular opportunities you provide for pupils from different year groups to work together on scientific challenges make for a novel approach to investigative work. It was lovely to hear from more able pupils who attend Saturday workshops and summer schools about what they have learnt and, most importantly, how you use their newly acquired skills back at school for the benefit of all. This is excellent practice.
- You provide an interesting range of lunchtime activities for the pupils and give the older ones appropriate responsibility for organising games and looking after the equipment which they do with pride. The popular gardening club is an excellent example of how the pupils' classroom learning is enriched by LOTC.

Leadership and management of LOTC

- LOTC is central to the school's vision and has been for some time. Your well thought out philosophy and beliefs for pupils' learning are suited to your school and have led curriculum innovation over several years. Monitoring is robust, as is evaluation. You are well supported by other staff members who understand the strategic direction of the school fully.
- You and the senior team have a good understanding of the needs of your pupils. There is strong professional dialogue and an infectious enthusiasm by all to evaluate practice to improve provision. The school has many good approaches to engage parents and seek their views. Your commitment to involve the pupils and their parents/carers through online questionnaires is excellent. Most importantly, you analyse returns diligently and act on suggestions made.

Inclusion

- You lead a very inclusive school where the needs of all the pupils are met in a caring, creative and consultative way. Pupils with learning difficulties receive sensitive care from the support staff.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- considering ways to formally collate the pupils' views about how LOTC helps them to make progress in their learning and incorporate them into all assessment and evaluation.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mary Harlow
Her Majesty's Inspector